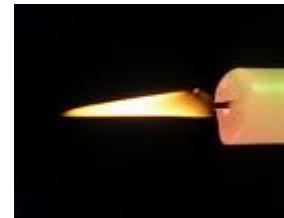
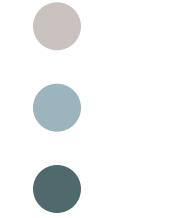


The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Spirituality



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Eastern University





Today's Outline

1. Introduction
2. A Picture of CSA in the US
3. What is Childhood Sexual Abuse?
4. Variables that impact CSA
5. Impact of CSA
6. Impact of CSA on Spirituality
7. CSA and Spirituality: A review of the research
8. Summary & Conclusion
9. Questions & Discussion

Introduction



They cry in the dark so you can't see
their tears
They hide in the light so you can't see
their fears
Forgive and forget all the while
Love and Pain
Become one and the same
In the eyes of a wounded child
Pat Benatar, "Hell is for children"

Introduction



- o CSA
- o Messages
- o Powerful Childhood
Messages
Devastating Impact
- o a Lifetime

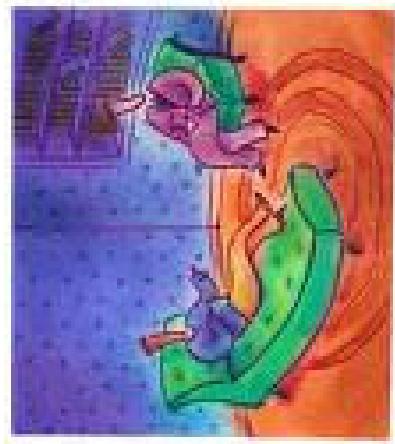


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Introduction



o A therapist's Perspective



o CSA - the most
Devastating

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A Picture of Childhood Sexual Abuse in the US

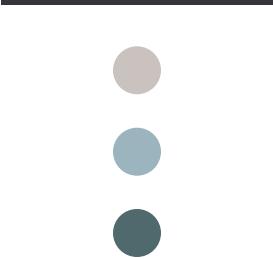


- Some sources indicate that every two minutes in the US a child is sexually abused, but less than 2% of molestations are ever reported.

A Picture of Childhood Sexual Abuse in the US



- Merina (1994) reported that there were "247,730 victims of sexual abuse in the US. In fact, one in every 6 American women becomes a victim of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime. It's equally alarming to discover that 1 out of 6 victims of sexual abuse are children, 12 years of age or younger.



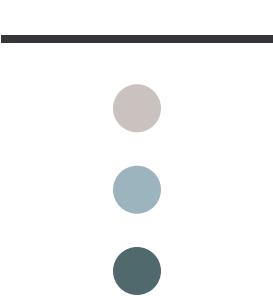
A Picture of Childhood Sexual Abuse in the US

- Of rape victims, 54% were under the age of 18 at the time of the first rape while 83% were under the age of 26.
- Men are also victims of sexual abuse and rape.
- Each year in the US, there are an estimated 92,700 males who fall victim to this terrible crime." (Merina, 1994 p.13).

A Picture of Childhood Sexual Abuse in the US



- “Over the Past 30 years, sexual abuse has emerged as a major social issue.”
- “Cycle of sexually abusive behavior indicates that many perpetrators were also abused when younger”

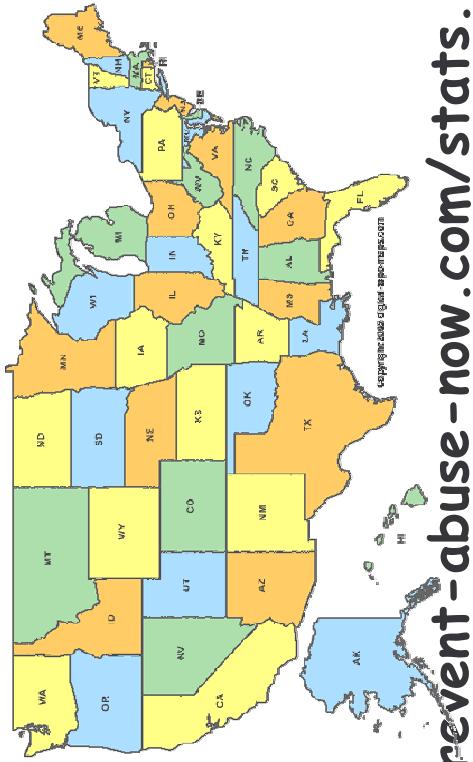


A Picture of Childhood Sexual Abuse in the US

- "Reported cases of child sexual abuse reached epidemic proportions, with a reported 322 percent increase from 1980 to 1990"
- "Approximately 95% of teenage prostitutes have been sexually abused."

A Picture of Childhood Sexual Abuse in the US

- "It is estimated that there are 60 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in America today."



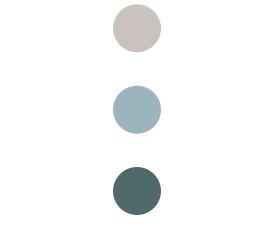
(<http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/stats.htm>)

What is childhood sexual abuse?



The following must exist:

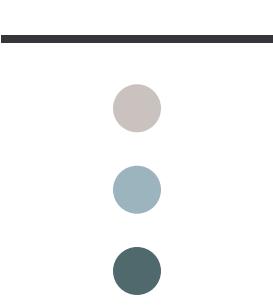
- The nature of the sexual act(s) is developmentally inappropriate for at least one of the participants.
- Unequal balance of power and authority between the two participants.
- The two individuals have an established emotional connection (Crowder, 1995).



What is Childhood Sexual Abuse?

Definition:

- Sexual activities that a child does not understand, to which a child cannot give consent, or which violate the social taboos of society (Krugman, 1986).



Variables that impact Childhood Sexual Abuse

- Age at which the abuse began
 - Frequency and duration
 - Types of activities that constituted the abuse
 - Use or force
- (Crowder, 1995; Hunter 1990; Kisiel & Lyons, 2001; Pierce 1987)

Variables that impact Childhood Sexual Abuse



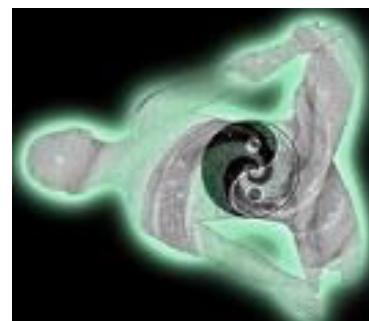
- The nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim
- The number and gender of the perpetrators involved in the abuse
- The manner in which disclosure of the abuse occurred
- Other attenuating circumstances in the victim's life

(Crowder, 1995; Hunter 1990; Kissiel & Lyons, 2001; Pierce 1987)

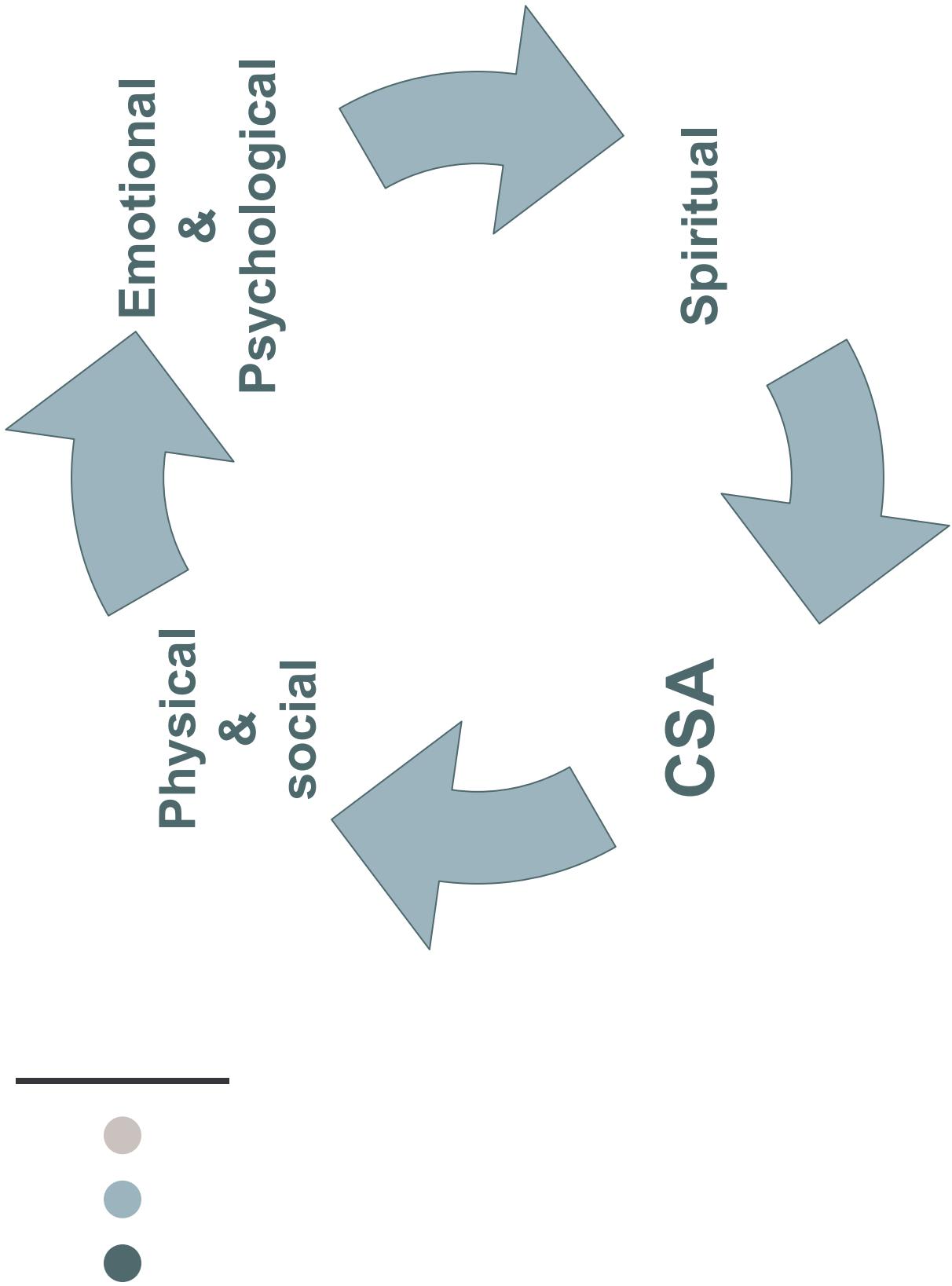
Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse



- Affects all aspects of the victim's being.

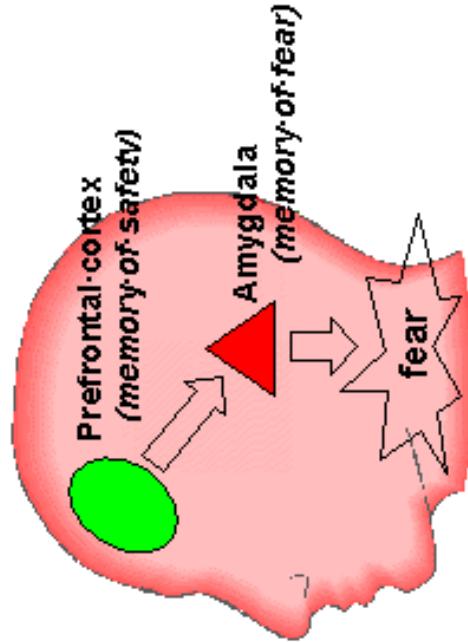


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Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse

- "More than $\frac{1}{2}$ of sexually abused children meet criteria for PTSD"



Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse



Some Core Emotions experienced

- Confusion
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger
- Loss of Trust

Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse



Some Core Emotions experienced

- Conflicted emotions
- "Body Betrayal."

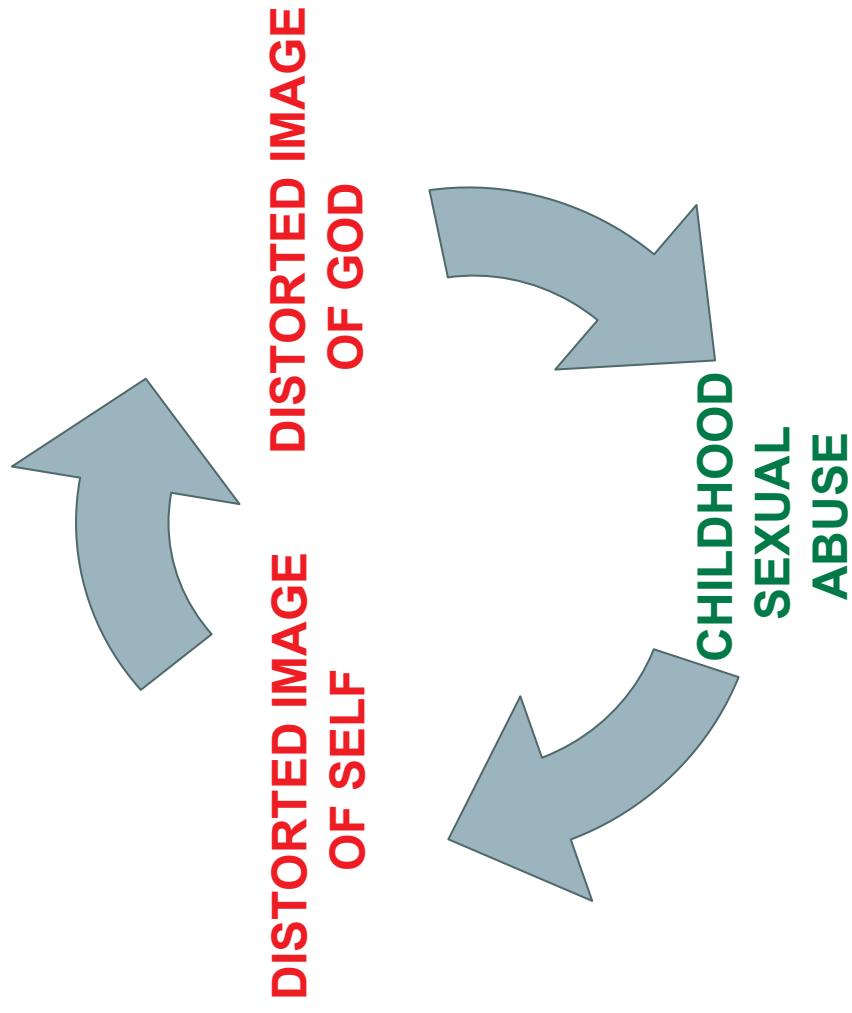
Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse



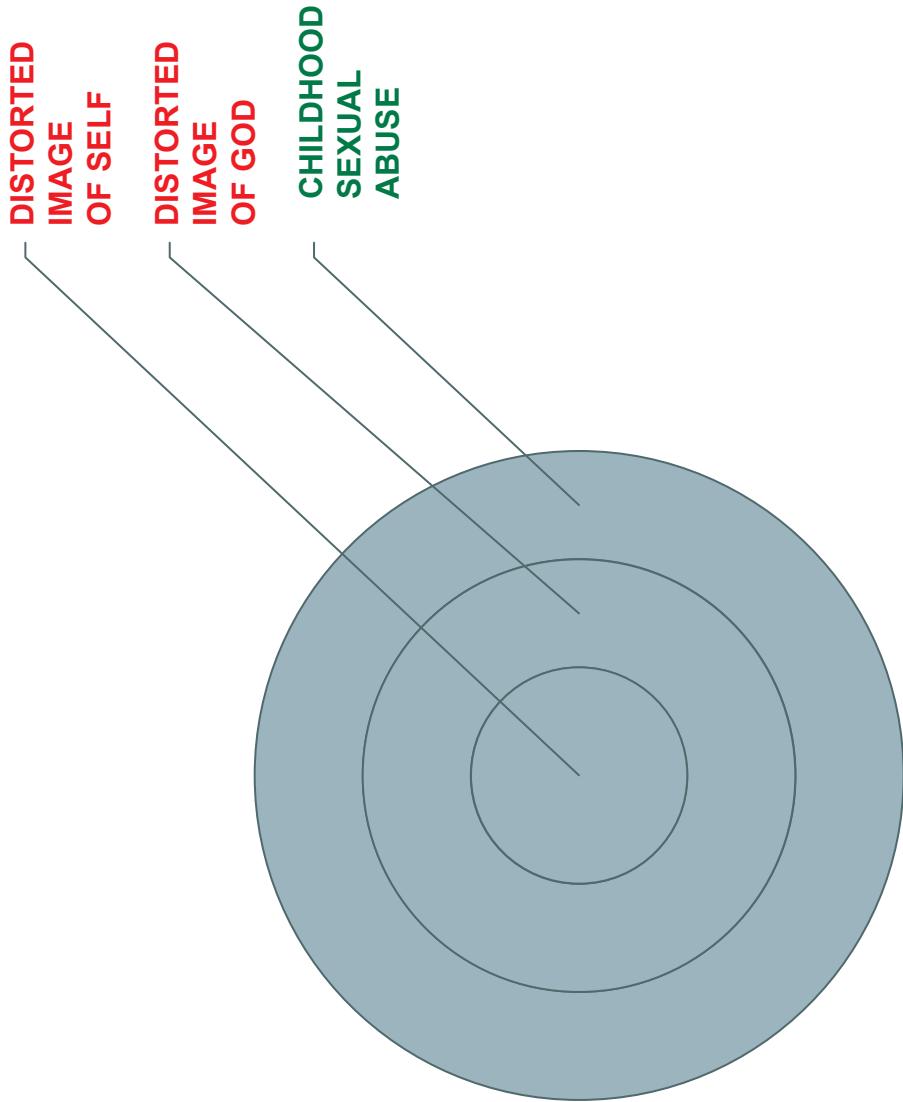
Child's Questions

- What is going on?
- What is happening to me?
- Is this right or wrong?
- Will it happen again?
- Should I tell someone?
- Questions → CONFUSION

Impact of CSA on Spirituality



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Impact of CSA on Spirituality

Distorted Image Of Self

- **Identity Confusion:** Victims may also have a feeling that "something is wrong with me," and that "it's my fault."

Impact of CSA on Spirituality



Distorted Image Of Self

- **Identity Confusion:** Victims of childhood sexual abuse tend to have a difficult time developing a healthy sense of self and self-efficacy.

Impact of CSA on Spirituality



Distorted Image Of Self

- **Identity Confusion:** The view of self is often more negative than children who have not suffered sexual abuse.
 - VOS :worthless; rejected; insignificant; abandoned.

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

Distorted Image Of Self

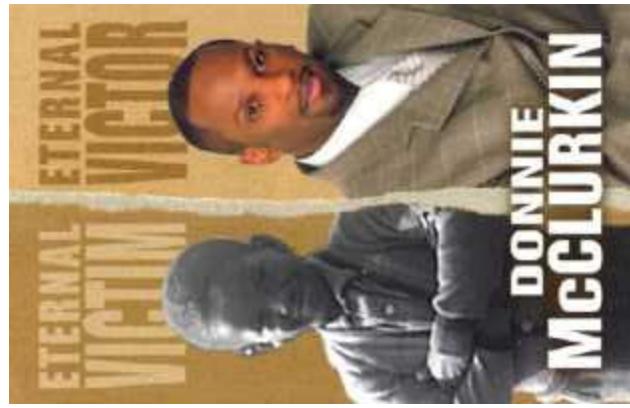
○ Identity Confusion in Male Survivors:

1. Difficulty with gender identity
2. Sexual orientation confusion

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

Distorted Image Of Self

- Identity Confusion in Male
Survivors: CASE STUDY



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Impact of CSA on Spirituality



Distorted Image Of Self

- Identity Confusion in Male Survivors: (Damaging questions)
 - Are you an offender?
 - Are you gay?

(Dimock, 1988; Myers 1989)

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

- Distorted Image Of Self
- Prevalent feeling among Male Survivors:

“that they responded sexually in circumstances in which a normal man would have been impotent. As a result, they came to regard themselves, as abnormal, which in turn kindled or rekindled feelings of inadequacy as a man.”

(Sarrel & Masters, 1982, p. 127)

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

Distorted Image Of Self

- Young victims of sexual assault often have cognitive distortions resulting from not being developmentally able to process or make sense of the traumatic event.

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

Distorted Image Of God

Some intense and Valid questions:

1. How could I trust the God of my _____ who prayed as _____ abused me?
2. How could I trust the God of my _____ who didn't protect me, and then, when the abuse was revealed didn't understand or support me?

Impact of CSA on Spirituality



Distorted Image Of God

Some intense and Valid questions:

3. How could an all-loving God allow this to happen to me?
4. How could an all-loving God allow me to suffer abuse for _____ years?
5. Where was God when
6. Why did God not punish _____ for doing this to me?

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

Distorted Images Of God

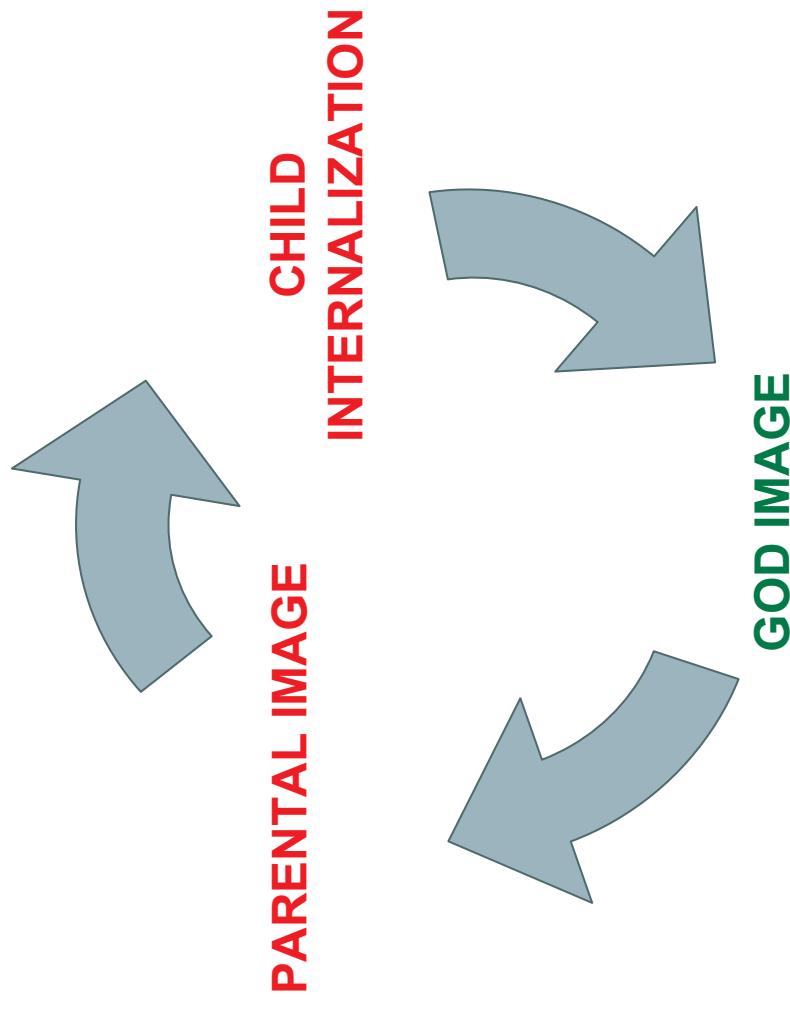
- o God is dead
- o God is absent; distant.
- o God is detached
- o God is inept; weak
- o God is powerless
- o God is undiscerning

Impact of CSA on Spirituality

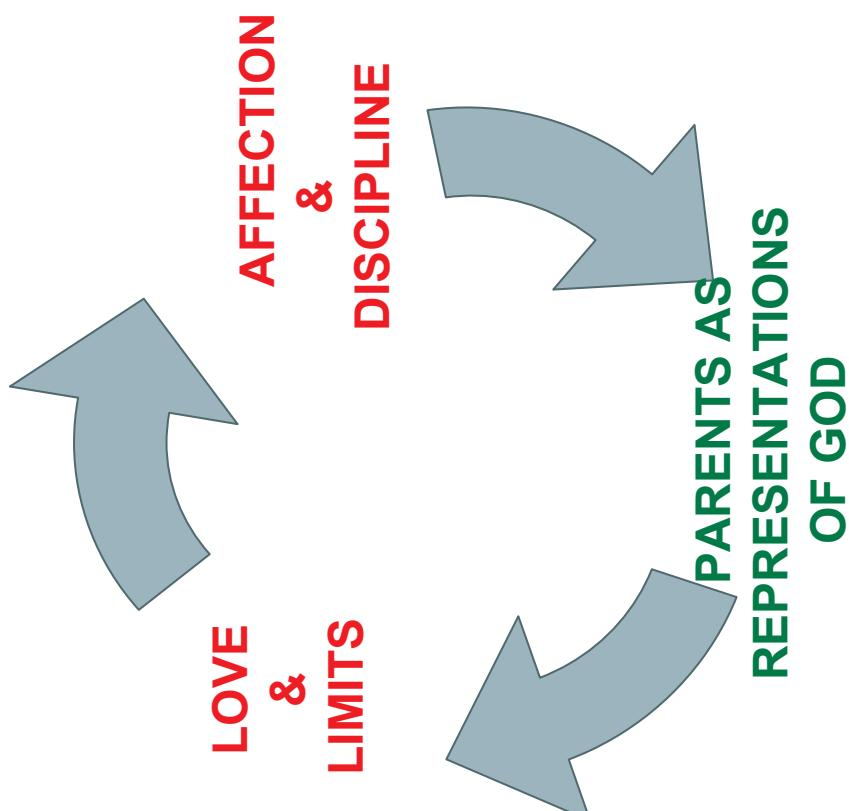
Distorted Images Of God

- o God doesn't care
- o God is disappointing
- o God is a punitive parent
- o God is judgmental
- o God is unjust; unfair
- o God is a "jerk"

Impact of CSA on Spirituality: understanding “God Image”

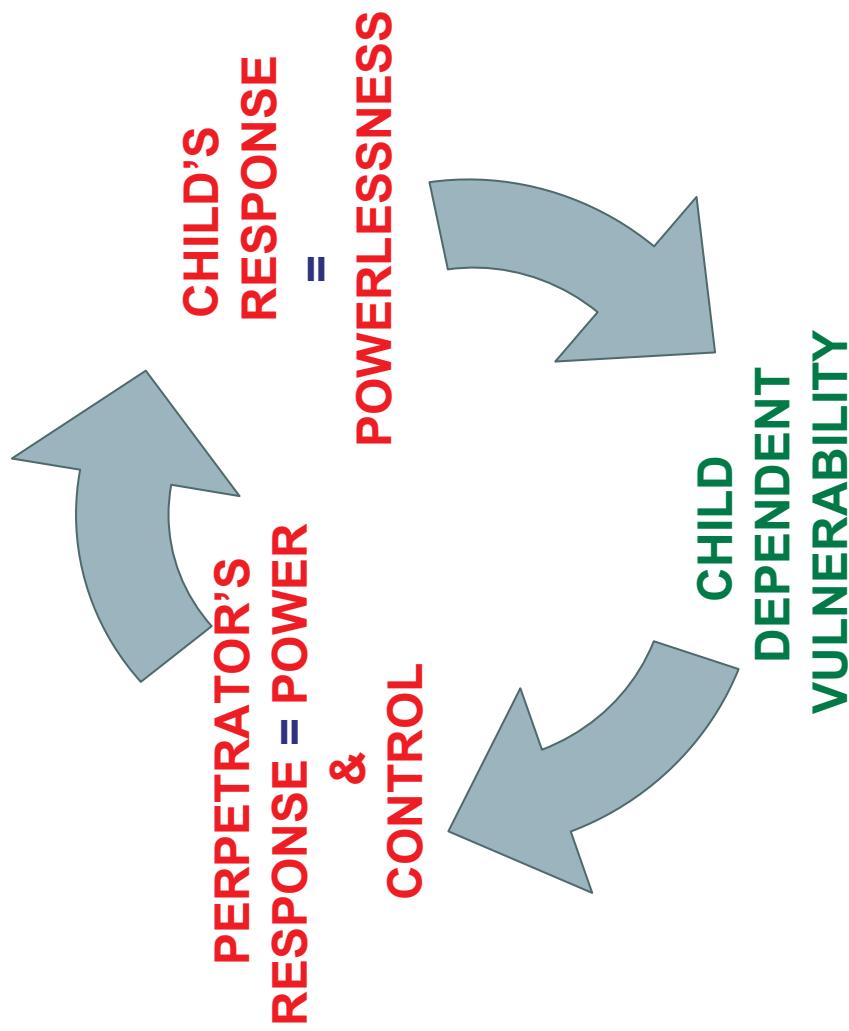


Impact of CSA on Spirituality: understanding “God Image”



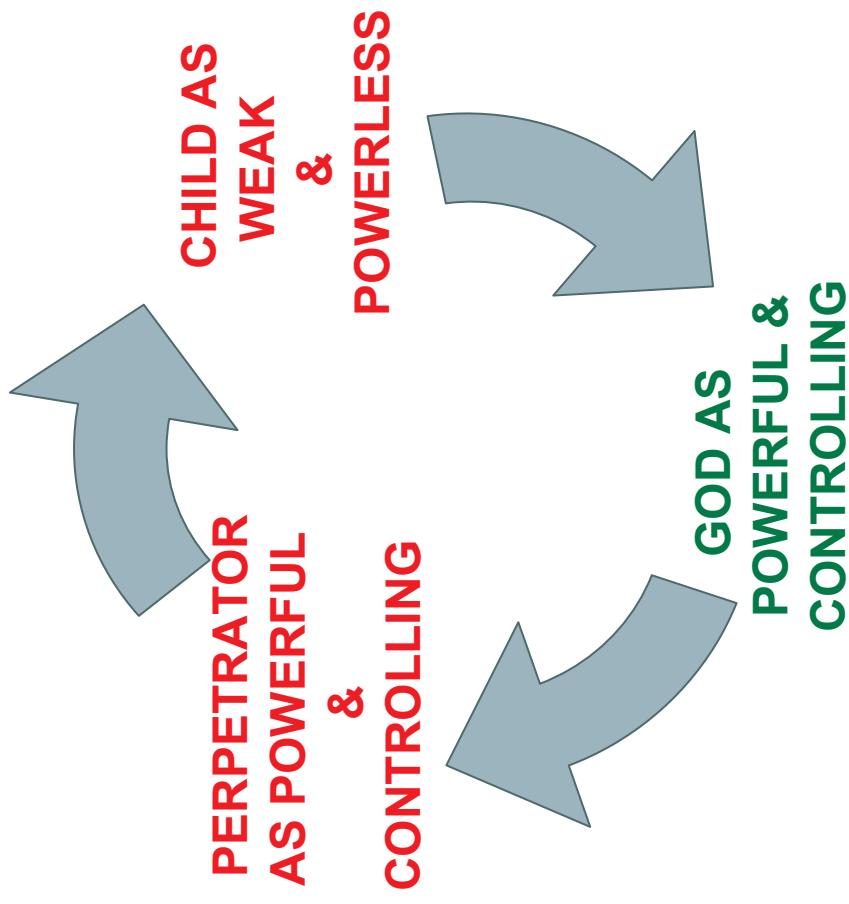
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Impact of CSA on Spirituality: understanding “God Image”



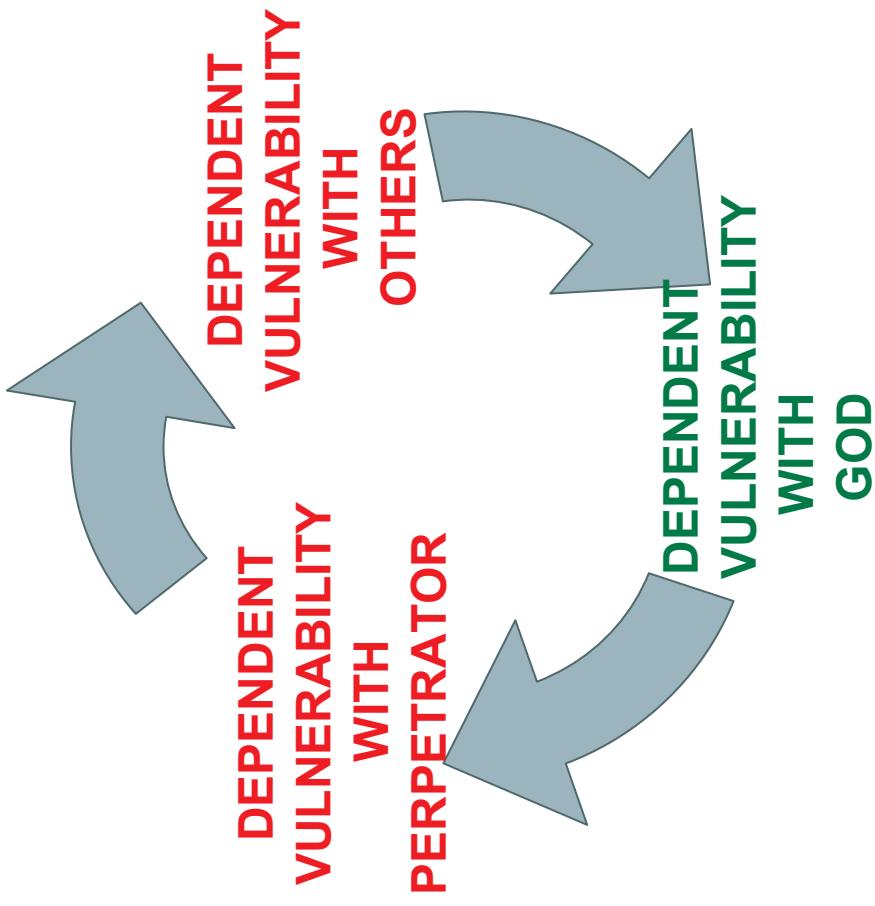
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Impact of CSA on Spirituality: understanding “God Image”



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Impact of CSA on Spirituality: understanding “God Image”



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CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Study:** (Pritt, A.F. (1998). *Spiritual Correlates of Reported Sexual Abuse among Mormon women*. **Sample:** Compares 115 women with reported sexual abuse as a child with 70 with no report (n=185)
- **Hypothesis:** Sexually abused women would show less spiritual well-being
- **Instrument:** Concept of God (Gorsuch and Spilka's Adjective Scales), sense of spiritual well-being (Patoutzian and Ellison's Spiritual Well-Being Scale - SWBS), and overall optimism or pessimism (Seligman's Attributional Style Questionnaire)

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Results:** Hypothesis was supported
- In all three areas sexually abused group scores were SIGNIFICANTLY MORE NEGATIVE than the scores of the non-abused group which suggests the relevance of spiritual issues in the treatment of survivors of child abuse
- Sexual Abuse was predictive of pessimism, spiritual well-being, and the wrathful, and distant concepts of God.

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Study:** (Doxey, C., Jensen, L., Jensen, J. (1997). *The Influence of Religion on Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse.* **Sample:** ($n= 5,417$)
653 reported being abused while growing up (13%)
- **Purpose of study:** to identify possible ameliorating effects of religion as a semi-treatment of helpful life experience.

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Results:** abused women scored lower on all measures.
- it was found that CSA experience was associated with less emotional maturity, lower self-esteem, more instability in relationships, and higher levels of depression

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Results:** highest scores were of women who were not abused and also highly religious
- Next were highly religious and abused, then lower scores for no abuse and low religious, then abuse and low religious, and lowest for abuse and medium religious belief.
- Religion could help ameliorate negative mental health outcomes associated with childhood sexual abuse

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Study:** (Gall, T. L., Basque, V., Damasceno-Scott, M., Vardy, G.) Spirituality and the Current Adjustment of Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. **Sample:** N=101 (men and women survivors), 17.8% men and 82.2 women
- **Instruments:** completed questionnaires on spirituality - God Image Scale (GIS) Lawrence (1997) - this assesses one's relationship with God, person factors, and current adjustment.

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Results:** results indicate that a relationship with a benevolent God or higher power is related to the experience of less negative mood and a greater sense of personal growth and resolution of the abuse

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Results:** "the more severe the type of abuse experienced in childhood, the less hope survivors currently experience. Survivors who experience a greater impact of the sexual abuse on their current lives report experiencing lower levels of hope and self-acceptance...abuse characteristics were not related to survivors' sense of relationship with a higher power"
- BUT

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



Results:

- "survivors who experience a greater sense of relationship with a benevolent God report less anxious, angry, and depressive moods and greater personal growth and resolution of the abuse..."
 - A relationship with a benevolent God is related to adult survivors' greater sense of hope and self-acceptance....
 - A relationship with a benevolent God is related to survivors ascribing less blame to the perpetrator of their childhood abuse"

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Study:** Valentine, L., Feinauer L.L.) Resilience Factors associated with female survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.
- **Purpose:** to search how they have been so resilient compared to contemporaries. **Sample:** (n=22); high risk for low self esteem, depression & shame due to childhood sexual abuse. mean age = 39, 100% white
- **Instruments:** questionnaire and interview

CSA and Spirituality: A Review of the Research



- **Results: resiliency themes**
 1. ability to find emotional support outside the family
 2. self-regard or ability to think well of oneself
 3. spirituality
 4. external attribution of blame and cognitive style
 5. internal locus of control
- women stated how important church was to their lifestyle and resiliency

Conclusion



- o Early sexual abuse results in **psychological** and **spiritual** damage.
- o The victim's ***Emotions*** and ***behavior*** are related to beliefs and perceptions about the traumatic experiences.

Conclusion

- o Without **psychotherapy** and **spiritual healing**, emotional and spiritual wounds persist.
- o These wounds become roadblocks for healthy development.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION



- o CSA is a significant problem in the United States.
- o CSA significantly affects the victims' spiritual development ("God image; " self-identity; self-efficacy; expression of spirituality)

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION



- Spirituality is an ameliorating variable for negative psychological outcomes associated with CSA.
- Spirituality is a positive factor in the healing process for victims of CSA.

QUESTIONS



DISCUSSION!
DISCUSSION!



THANK YOU !!!

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